

# RCRC

Red Cross Red Crescent

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**The World Humanitarian Summit**

Are the promises made in Istanbul a big deal for humanity?

**The fight against Zika**

Latin America gears up against another mosquito-borne disease

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The Healthy Lifestyles recipe is catching on in Mexico and beyond



In Ethiopia, extreme drought conditions are being exacerbated by the 2014–2016 El Niño, which is leading to nutrition and health problems for more than 10 million people. Ethiopia is not alone. El Niño is worsening already extreme weather and intense suffering in many parts of Africa, Latin America and South-East Asia. In the above photo, Ethiopian Red Cross Society volunteers brought food, healthcare and other essentials to the hard-hit and remote Afar region. Learn more about the global Red Cross and Red Crescent response to the 2014–2016 El Niño on page 24.

Photo: Marjo Leppänen/Finnish Red Cross

# Humanity under fire



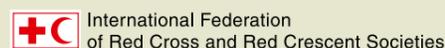
THE MAGAZINE OF THE INTERNATIONAL  
RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT MOVEMENT

# The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement is made up of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) and the National Societies.



ICRC

**The International Committee of the Red Cross** is an impartial, neutral and independent organization whose exclusively humanitarian mission is to protect the lives and dignity of victims of armed conflict and other situations of violence and to provide them with assistance. The ICRC also endeavours to prevent suffering by promoting and strengthening humanitarian law and universal humanitarian principles. Established in 1863, the ICRC is at the origin of the Geneva Conventions and the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. It directs and coordinates the international activities conducted by the Movement in armed conflicts and other situations of violence.



International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies

**The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)** is the world's largest volunteer-based humanitarian network, reaching 160 million people each year through its 190 member National Societies. Together, the IFRC acts before, during and after disasters and health emergencies to meet the needs and improve the lives of vulnerable people. It does so with impartiality as to nationality, race, gender, religious beliefs, class and political opinions. Guided by Strategy 2020 — a collective plan of action to tackle the major humanitarian and development challenges of this decade — the IFRC is committed to 'saving lives and changing minds'.



**National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies** embody the work and principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement in more than 190 countries. National Societies act as auxiliaries to the public authorities of their own countries in the humanitarian field and provide a range of services including disaster relief, health and social programmes. During wartime, National Societies assist the affected civilian population and support the army medical services where appropriate.

## The International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement

is guided by seven Fundamental Principles:

**humanity, impartiality, neutrality, independence, voluntary service, unity and universality.**

All Red Cross and Red Crescent activities have one central purpose:

**to help without discrimination those who suffer and thus contribute to peace in the world.**

# World Humanitarian Summit: a big deal for humanity?

**At the Istanbul meeting in May, donors agreed to give more support to local organizations and offer more unearmarked and multi-year funding. In exchange, they want greater accountability and impact. We asked people in countries affected by recurrent or protracted crises what these promises mean to them and what will it take to put them into action. Read more of their thoughts and share your own at [www.rcrcmagazine.org](http://www.rcrcmagazine.org)**

comfort zone to engage with others more than we do. We are different from other humanitarian actors but we can create bridges to connect with them and expand our impact.



**Georges Kettaneh**  
Secretary General, Lebanese Red Cross

The Humanitarian Summit was much more than just a two-day meeting for 9,000 people. It began long before with preparatory meetings, including here in Lebanon. Whatever impact will be felt will go on well into the

future. In theory, the pledge to develop longer-term financing and give more support to local organizations was very positive. But now we have to see how it will work at the local level. For me, the measure of success will be in how well we manage to build the capacity of principled local organizations such as National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies which have community acceptance and are there to respond over the long term.

At the Lebanese Red Cross we understand this well. The Syrian crisis has lasted more than six years now and we have been going full-speed ahead since the beginning. We ramped up our response and our capacity in order to maintain the intensity of our response.

Before the conflict, the annual budget for our headquarters in Beirut was US\$ 5 million. Today, it's more than US\$ 25 million. We grew our capacity to manage and control these resources by working with our partners. This is critical because strong, accountable and transparent organizations are more accepted by the community.

Our operational capacity has also expanded dramatically. The Lebanese Red Cross is leading and working with 21 National Societies, the IFRC and the ICRC. We are also sharing leadership in a lot of areas — health, nutrition and water, sanitation and hygiene promotion — and it's a big challenge. It's not just about responding but about working in complementary ways with government and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

It's very important that donors and partners understand all this. International NGOs can leave when they run out of money but we are still here, facing the community. So we have to be very clear in our plans and commitments so we can manage the expectations of communities and expand or reduce programmes or staff and volunteers in a proper and dignified way. The commitments made at the Summit to provide longer-term funding and more unearmarked funding could help foster this kind of stability, reliability, continuity and dignity both for the dedicated first responders and for the people to whom they are offering their comfort, care and support.



**Merewalesi Nailatikau**  
Youth commission chair,  
Fiji Red Cross Society

Photo: Shawn Michienzi

I was quite proud of the Movement's position at the Summit, particularly with its emphasis on human dignity and the idea of 'intervention as local as possible, as international as necessary' as well as our message concerning the humanitarian 'eco-system', that there is not one humanitarian system but rather many different systems and approaches. This helped sharpen people's understanding that the Movement, with its Fundamental Principles and its way of working, must keep its own distinct approach even as it works alongside other large humanitarian systems.

Also, the Movement made its position on the importance of localizing the response very clear — something that was not otherwise given enough prominence at the Summit.



**Frehiwot Worku**  
Secretary General,  
Ethiopian Red Cross Society

Photo: Anteneh Akillu

The World Humanitarian Summit was about delivering together — donors and humanitarian organizations — and coordinating our humanitarian response, while at the same time expanding the capacities of local organizations such as National Societies. This makes a lot of sense because if National Societies are more effective, donors will also be more supportive. But we all must be part of building that system together, and it is not just about money. Sometimes, it's expertise that is required. We may need partners to embed within a National Society, to accompany them in developing organizational systems so they can manage the monitoring and reporting requirements of donors. In the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, meanwhile, we have to be able to compromise and get out of our

## El Niño sweeps southern Africa

As El Niño-related drought conditions swept across southern Africa, some 49 million people will likely be struggling to get adequate food by the end of the year, according to the IFRC. Lesotho, Malawi, Swaziland and Zimbabwe all declared states of emergency, as have seven of South Africa's nine provinces. Mozambique declared a 'red alert' in its central and southern provinces. In response, the IFRC has announced a US\$ 110 million, four-year initiative to support the response of National Red Cross Societies in drought-affected countries in southern Africa. In addition to relief efforts, including emergency distributions of cash, the initiative will help at-risk communities expand traditional livelihoods. In one project, the Malawi Red Cross Society provides families with goats to breed and sell for income. The families then return some livestock to help other families.

## ICRC: sparing the civilians of Fallujah

Fierce fighting around the Iraqi city of Fallujah in May raised serious concerns about the well-being and safety of civilians still trapped in and around the city. The situation was particularly problematic for the tens of thousands of men, women, children and elderly people who

remain stuck inside Fallujah, the largest town in Anbar province, and who have had very limited access to food, water and basic healthcare for the past two years. "Civilians must be spared and allowed to leave Fallujah safely, while houses and other civilian infrastructure must not be targeted," said Katharina Ritz, ICRC head of delegation in Iraq.

## Yellow fever outbreak could spread, IFRC warns

A deadly yellow fever outbreak in Angola has now spread to China, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Kenya. The IFRC warned in May that fears are growing that the disease will continue to spread internationally unless immediate action is taken. "Limited vaccine supplies, poor sanitation, inadequate disease surveillance systems and everyday cross-border interaction could turn a national outbreak into a larger crisis," said Fatoumata Nafou-Traoré, director of IFRC's Africa region. In Angola and the DRC, the IFRC has deployed Regional Disaster Response Team members and released start-up funds from its Disaster Relief Emergency Fund to support anti-yellow fever operations. The IFRC also launched a US\$ 1.45 million emergency appeal to support the Angola Red Cross and other local partners reach roughly 9 million people with vaccines and infection-prevention measures. Yellow fever is transmitted by the *Aedes aegypti*



Photo: REUTERS/Ismaïl Zetouni

## Deaths at sea continue in the Mediterranean

In May 2016 alone, more than 1,080 people were reported missing or drowned as they attempted to make the dangerous crossing of the Mediterranean Sea towards Europe, according to the International Organization for Migration. The IFRC, its member National Societies and the ICRC continue to call for governments and institutions to ensure the protection of migrants and for all people to recognize their right to safety and dignity. Meanwhile Red Cross and Red Crescent volunteers continued to help thousands of survivors on the sea's northern and southern shores. In May, for example, Libyan Red Crescent volunteers provided food, blankets and vital health services to more than 200 people rescued near the port city of Zuwarah and they transferred survivors requiring medical attention to nearby hospitals. Libyan Red Crescent teams also retrieved bodies of those who had drowned, ensuring they were transported with respect and dignity before being buried. In one incident in early June, they retrieved 117 bodies.

mosquito, which is also responsible for spreading the Zika virus, dengue and chikungunya.

## 'I used to sit alone'

When the unrest that shook Burundi in April 2015 spread to their home province of Kirundo, Gérard and his 14-year-old brother feared for their lives. "We left home in the middle of the night and followed other people who were leaving for Rwanda,"

said Gérard. The two brothers made it to Bugesera in southern Rwanda, close to the border with Burundi, where they split up to try to find a way to survive. "I used to sit alone and wonder how I was ever going to find my parents," said Gérard. A year later, Gérard and two other boys — 13-year-old Ernest and 12-year-old Eric — were reunited with their parents, brothers, sisters and friends with help from ICRC.

## Voices

*"There is no safe place anymore in Aleppo. Even in hospitals."*

Marianne Gasser, head of the ICRC delegation in Syria

*"When so-called surgical strikes end up hitting hospitals, something is deeply wrong."*

Ban Ki-moon, United Nations Secretary-General

## Humanitarian index

**25:** Percentage of global humanitarian aid that will go to locally based groups according to the 'Grand Bargain', an agreement between donors and aid agencies signed at the World Humanitarian Summit.\*  
**105:** Number of Burundian children reconnected with their loved ones by the ICRC between April 2015 and April 2016.\*\*  
**122:** Number of documented attacks on hospitals in Syria in 2015, according to a recently

formed consortium of leading medical establishments, known as The Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition.\*\*\*  
**2,900:** Number of suspected cases of yellow fever reported in Angola as of June 2016. A total of 325 people were known to have died from the disease.\*\*\*\*  
**1.3 million:** Number of people who die as a result of wartime violence, crime and self-inflicted injury each year, 2 per cent of global mortality.\*\*

**31.6 million:** Estimated number of people across southern Africa struggling to get adequate food due to worsening drought conditions as of May 2016.\*\*\*\*  
**125 million:** Number of people estimated to be in need of humanitarian assistance.\*\*\*\*  
**25 billion:** Amount in US dollars spent on humanitarian aid each year globally.\*\*

Sources: \*United Nations, \*\*ICRC, \*\*\*The Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition, \*\*\*\*IFRC, \*\*\*\*\*UN OCHA

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Hospitals attacked. Health and first-aid workers killed. Heavily populated urban areas bombarded. Examples of disrespect for international humanitarian law (IHL) are in the news every day. Examples of IHL helping to assist and protect vulnerable people get far less attention. These examples prove the rules of war can work if they are respected.

## ■ The World Humanitarian Summit A big deal for humanity?

Three months after the World Humanitarian Summit, what do those it sought to help think the big promises and agreements made in Istanbul will mean for them?

## ■ Humanitarian financing In for the long haul

Donors and relief organizations agree that people hit hard by recurring natural disaster or trapped in protracted conflict need more stable, long-term support.

## ■ A bigger piece of the pie

Among the agreements at the World Humanitarian Summit is a pledge to increase to 25 per cent the share of total humanitarian spending that goes directly to local and national organizations. But is this easier said than done?

## ■ Focus The first ones

They are first on the scene and, usually, are the ones who remain after international helpers have gone home. These photos provide a glimpse into the

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daily dangers that first responders face, whether battling wildfires in western Canada, responding to bomb blasts in central Aleppo in Syria or helping communities in smaller, 'forgotten' crises.

## ■ Emergency health The fight against Zika

With plenty of front-line experience fighting the mosquito that spreads chikungunya and dengue, National Societies in Latin America gear up against another mosquito-borne disease.

## ■ Non-communicable disease Something's cooking in Navojoa

One cup social media, two spoonfuls of enthusiasm, a handful of exercise and healthy food, plus a dose of good old-fashioned fun equal the ingredients of a healthy community. The Healthy Lifestyles recipe is catching on in Mexico and beyond.

## ■ Climate change The return of 'super' El Niño

Caused when surface water in tropical parts of the Pacific Ocean become warmer than average, the 2014–2016 El Niño weather patterns are wreaking havoc in various corners of the globe. This collection of images reveals what the current El Niño, which many are comparing to the 1997–1998 'super' El Niño, is doing to communities around the world.

## ■ Resources

Publications, online resources and videos including new commentaries on international humanitarian law and the Movement's response to the Istanbul summit.

We gratefully acknowledge the assistance of researchers and support staff of the ICRC, the IFRC and National Societies. The magazine is published three times a year in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish and is available in 190 countries, with a circulation of more than 70,000.

The opinions expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement. Unsolicited articles are welcomed, but cannot be returned.

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The maps in this publication are for information purposes only and have no political significance.

**On the cover:** Illustration by Basil Flayes, a volunteer for the Syrian Arab Red Crescent, based in Aleppo, Syria. *Red Cross Red Crescent* magazine asked Flayes to design a cover image for our article on international humanitarian law after one of his paintings won second place in an illustration contest about the Fundamental Principles organized as part of the ICRC's Safer Access Framework project.

Photos this page from top: REUTERS/Hamid Khatib; Erhan Elaldi/Anadolu Agency; Bangladesh Red Crescent Society; Miguel Domingo Garcia/IFRC; Nadia Shira Cohen/IFRC



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# Humanity under fire

**Bombed hospitals. Health and first-aid workers killed. Heavily populated urban areas bombarded. What can be done to ensure respect for the rules of war?**

IT'S A SAD AND FAMILIAR PATTERN:

**April 2015:** Two brothers working for the local branch of the Yemen Red Crescent Society shot dead in the southern port city of Aden while evacuating wounded people to a waiting ambulance. Both were wearing the red crescent emblem. The same day, two Syrian Arab Red Crescent volunteers were killed while retrieving dead bodies and preparing shelters for people fleeing the fighting.

For each person lost, a wake of devastation. Family and colleagues shocked and grieving. Desperately wounded or sick people left without care. National Society, IFRC and ICRC leaders issuing joint statements condemning the attacks and calling on all parties to respect international humanitarian law (IHL) and to allow humanitarian workers safe and unimpeded access to people in need.

And then the cycle repeats itself:

**September 2015:** Two Yemen Red Crescent Society volunteers killed along with other civilians during an airstrike in the Al-Swaida area of Taiz, bringing to eight the number of Yemen Red Crescent Society staff and volunteers killed in the course of their duties between March and September 2015.

**November 2015:** Two Syrian Arab Red Crescent volunteers killed when a mortar shell hit a

civilian area of Homs as they transported supplies as part of a project helping children traumatized by the conflict.

## The list goes on

Since the beginning of the conflict in Syria, more than 52 Syrian Arab Red Crescent Society and 8 Palestine Red Crescent aid workers have lost their lives trying to help others. These deaths are not isolated. They come over a backdrop in which laws protecting civilians in conflict are regularly ignored and in which the use of high-impact explosives in densely populated urban areas has become routine. On the

➔ Al-Quds hospital in Aleppo, Syria after it was hit by airstrikes in April 2016.

Photo: REUTERS/Abdallah Ismail

same day the two Yemeni volunteers were killed in September, for example, more than 130 people attending a wedding in Yemen were reportedly killed by an airstrike.

This is not to say that IHL is never respected. In many war zones, people take part in operations on a daily basis in which aid workers gain assurances from fighters — based on humanitarian principles and law — that they will be not be fired on or otherwise harassed.

Such events don't often make the news or go viral on social media. But such examples do have a concrete impact. The ICRC points out, for example, that the rules of war allow the humanitarian access needed in Syria to provide fresh water to 20 million people. The Ottawa Convention prohibiting the

use and manufacture of landmines, meanwhile, has reduced annual deaths and injury from 20,000 per year to 3,000 per year.

In recent years, however, such signs of progress has been overshadowed by the constant bombardment of bad news for humanitarian law. In one day in Aleppo, Syria earlier this year, four medical facilities on both sides of the front lines were hit as hundreds of shells, bombs and mortars rained down on the city, killing more civilians.

"There can be no justification for these appalling acts of violence deliberately targeting hospitals and clinics," Marianne Gasser, head of the ICRC in Syria, said in a statement after the attack. "There is no safe place anymore in Aleppo. Even in hospitals."

Several of the deadliest attacks hit hospitals supported by Médecins sans Frontières (MSF). In just one case in May 2016, 14 people were killed, including at least two doctors. "[The attack] killed one of the last remaining paediatricians in the city," Joanne Liu, the international president of the group, would later tell the United Nations (UN) Security Council.

But such incidents are not limited to the Syrian conflict. In October 2015, a United States warplane bombed a hospital run by MSF in Kunduz, Afghanistan. Forty-two people, including 24 patients, 14 health workers and four caretakers, were killed. After the bombing, an investigation by US officials determined the pilot did not intend to target the hospital and that the incident was due to a series of command-chain and pilot errors.

**“There can be no justification for these appalling acts of violence deliberately targeting hospitals and clinics. There is no safe place anymore in Aleppo. Even in hospitals.”**

**Marianne Gasser**, head of the ICRC delegation in Syria

Whether tragic mistakes or part of intentional strategies, incidents of this nature have become far too commonplace. According to a recently formed consortium of leading international medical establishments, known as the Safeguarding Health in Conflict Coalition, hospitals in five countries — Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Syria and Yemen — have been subjected to both aerial bombing and explosives launched from the ground.

The increasing frequency of these attacks is one reason why in early May 2016, the UN Security Council unanimously adopted a resolution to strengthen protection for healthcare workers, the sick and wounded, hospitals and clinics in war zones. “When so-called surgical strikes end up hitting hospitals, something is deeply wrong,” UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said at the time.

### Calls for action

For these reasons, many were hoping the World Humanitarian Summit, which convened in Istanbul in May to address important reforms in humanitarian aid, would also be a chance to galvanize greater support for the protection of civilians during conflict. One month prior to the Summit, the UN Secretary-General issued a report making just that case. In the event of conflict, he argued, adhering to IHL is the single most important way to reduce human suffering in armed conflicts.

But the structure of the Summit — a multi-stakeholder event that put non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on an equal footing with states — was not set up to result in binding commitments between states. Rather, its structure tended to focus

on agreements between donors and aid groups and reforms within the aid sector.

For some organizations, such as MSF, this emphasis came at the expense of high-level political efforts to protect civilians and medical workers. Three weeks before the meeting, MSF pulled out of the Summit in protest. “The Summit has become a fig-leaf of good intentions, allowing these systematic violations, by states above all, to be ignored,” said MSF in a statement.

The Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement took a different approach. Although only 55 heads of state attended, the Summit still offered an important platform to push for action in support of IHL’s basic protections.

“What will future historians remember from our present time?” ICRC President Peter Maurer asked an audience at the Summit. “That millions of people were deliberately or carelessly targeted; that their homes, hospitals and schools were destroyed and entire cities bombed to rubble; that millions of men, women and children were forced into displacement?”

“We still have a shot at making a different kind of history.”

By the end of the Summit, 48 of the UN member states attending endorsed a joint statement affirming the importance of and adherence to IHL. But it remains to be seen if that pledge (signed by several states involved in ongoing conflicts) and the resolution of the UN Security Council will change the way warfare is being waged.

One of the key problems is that there is no consensus among humanitarian organizations, legal scholars and states on how to ensure compliance

with the laws of war. Under the Geneva Conventions and Additional Protocol I, there are three potential mechanisms that a state party to an international armed conflict can trigger to investigate abuses.

Developed at a time when most conflicts were international disputes between states, these three mechanisms have rarely been put into action, in part because one of the main mechanisms — the international fact-finding commission — must be agreed on by both sides. Today, use of the commission is considered even less likely, given that most armed conflicts involve states and one or more non-state armed groups. (For more about existing and proposed legal mechanisms to ensure compliance with rules of war, see [www.rccrmagazine.org](http://www.rccrmagazine.org))

### The roots of respect

In the absence of a clear and effective enforcement mechanism, efforts to encourage better compliance through softer methods continue. The ICRC, for example, continues to urge states, armed forces and non-state armed groups to weave principles embedded in the Geneva Conventions into both policy and practice. The efforts range from training sessions with soldiers and top brass, to lobbying lawmakers to enact legislation that codifies IHL into national laws.

In today’s increasingly complex conflicts, which feature a proliferation of non-state armed groups with a wide range of political philosophies and non-hierarchical command structures, that task has become more complicated.

Traditional IHL training and dissemination is possible when forces have a ‘vertical structure’ and clear chains of command. That is not so easy in many armed conflicts today.

“Look at Libya, where there were 246 armed groups registered in Misrata alone,” notes Fiona Terry, a research adviser at ICRC who has written extensively on humanitarian action in conflict. That said, Terry warns against the tendency of some observers to suggest that armed groups are the main violators of IHL. “States have also violated IHL and committed atrocities,” she says.

Given the changing nature of conflict, the ICRC wants to know more about why people do or don’t violate the rules of war, whatever kind of organization they may belong to. For this reason, the ICRC commissioned Terry and other researchers to update a 2004 study called *The Roots of Behaviour in War*. The update looks at what impact the integration of IHL training within armed forces has had, why violations occur and what restrains people from violating the rules of war. This research could inform new approaches best suited to today’s conflicts.

In the meantime, says Helen Durham, director of Law and Policy at the ICRC, part of the answer lies in



## A total loss of respect?

The images appear daily on TV, online and in social media. Bombings of hospitals, extrajudicial executions and other gross violations of the rules of war. No wonder some question whether the system of laws protecting people during conflict is losing ground. At a recent forum entitled ‘Is the law of war in crisis?’, IHL expert Marco Sassòli answered that question with a ‘yes’ and a ‘no’.

“International law generally is in crisis,” Sassòli told the gathering. “So it is not astonishing that IHL is also perceived as in a crisis.”

It’s not necessarily the laws that are at fault, however. “The Geneva Conventions contain the right answers,” even for today’s conflicts, he says. The problem is respect for those laws. But, Sassòli argues, despite the horrific headlines, there is more compliance with IHL than first meets the eye.

The rise of social media, citizen journalists and human rights organizations using mobile phones to document the effects of warfare on people who live in war zones has shed much-needed light on violations on IHL. “On the other hand, it creates the impression that IHL is only violated,” says Sassòli. “I have also seen plenty of respect for IHL in some conflicts. Understandably, NGOs and the media only report on violations.”

So to what degree are the Geneva Conventions respected? This is a difficult question to answer, but a recent ICRC project to update commentaries on the Geneva Conventions shows that for many states, IHL is very much a very relevant body of law applied in policy, in practice and in courtrooms.

Even in war zones such as Syria, the laws of war play a vital role, says Jean-Marie Henckaerts, head of the Commentaries Update Unit, part of ICRC’s Legal Division.

“Whenever we are able to gain access across front lines, delivering clean drinking water, medical aid and relief, it shows that these laws are saving lives,” he says. “We must avoid falling into a vicious cycle in which states and armed groups argue that because the laws are being violated, they are not working and so can be further violated.”

doing a better job at communicating not just about violations but also about examples of when the law is working and the concrete impact that respect has on the ground. “Demonstrating the practical value of restricting suffering during war reminds everyone of the importance of IHL,” says Durham. “While it can seem really hard in the face of information received every day, it is in everyone’s interest to continue to raise the fact that even wars have limits.” ■

By **Malcolm Lucard**

Malcolm Lucard is editor of *Red Cross Red Crescent* magazine.

To learn more about Movement efforts to ensure respect for IHL and protect civilian populations and aid workers, please see [www.rccrmagazine.org](http://www.rccrmagazine.org)

While violations of the rules of war tend to get more headlines, there are daily examples, such as this Syrian Arab Red Crescent aid convoy, that show how international humanitarian law is a critical part of saving lives during conflict. This convoy heads towards the villages of al-Foua and Kefraya in Idlib governorate, Syria in March 2016. Photo: REUTERS/Ammar Abdullah



Hospital beds in the Médecins sans Frontières hospital in Kunduz, Afghanistan on 26 April 2016, about six months after a US airstrike killed dozens of patients. Photo: REUTERS/Josh Smith



☞ The president of the Turkish Red Crescent Society Kerem Kinik makes a point about cash transfers during a press conference; IFRC Under Secretary General for Partnerships Jemilah Mahmood takes part in a panel discussion; UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon during the opening ceremony; German Chancellor Angela Merkel, one of 55 heads of state to attend; summit attendees take part in one of many cultural side events.  
Photo credits, left to right: Erhan Elaldi/Anadolu Agency; Islam Yakut/Anadolu Agency; REUTERS/Osman Orsal; REUTERS/Ozan Kose; Turkish Red Crescent Society.

# A big deal for humanity?

Three months after delegates to the World Humanitarian Summit have gone back to their communities, what will all the big promises mean over the long term?

**W**ITH THE WAR IN SYRIA in its sixth year, and upwards of 2.7 million refugees of that war now living in Turkey, the choice of Istanbul as host for the World Humanitarian Summit was particularly poignant. One didn't need to look far to confront the very challenges the global meeting was seeking to address.

"There are hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees in Istanbul," noted Naci Yorulmaz, vice president of the Turkish Red Crescent Society, who was cautiously optimistic that the global meeting in May 2016, organized by the United Nations (UN), could be an important step towards solving an overwhelming set of pressing humanitarian problems and helping humanitarian organizations generate more pressure on states for action.

"After this meeting, I hope we will have a stronger voice," he said. Giving a voice to local and nationally based humanitarian organizations — and the people they seek to help — was a recurrent theme at the Summit, which brought 9,000 delegates from

173 countries together around the Herculean task of reshaping the way aid is delivered and pressing states to make concrete commitments to end conflicts or, in the meantime, protect civilians caught in the crossfire.

Extensive consultations with local relief organizations and communities affected by crises helped shape the Summit's call for greater local involvement in humanitarian decision-making. For Yorulmaz, the true test of how well the Summit attains that goal is whether the people affected by conflict and other emergencies see any meaningful change in their situations.

"We should go out and say to them: 'We had another meeting in an expensive hotel, talking about your problems. But what needs to change for you on a daily basis?'"

One person in a good position to answer this question is Al Hakam Shaar. Born and raised in the Syrian city of Aleppo, Shaar is a researcher at The Aleppo Project, a platform for Syrians and non-Syrians to discuss the future of this war-torn city. Shaar says many of his fellow Syrians feel the ideas proposed at the Summit are indeed relevant.

But he said it's hard for many of them to see how the agreements made in Istanbul will affect the dire situation people face every day. "Many of the criticisms of the Summit were that, although it called for fighting the root causes of human suffering — rather than always remedying the situation — there were no suggested mechanisms to achieve this," he said.

## Herculean task

While the Summit produced nothing close to a radical rethink of the aid system, or any ground-breaking commitments to the protection of civilians (see page 4), 48 states did sign a new pledge in support of international humanitarian law. Further, the meeting produced many constructive disruptions to business as usual. Perhaps the most significant outcome was the signing of the 'Grand Bargain' — a package of reforms to make aid delivery more efficient and sustainable — signed by the top 30 donors and agencies and supported by the IFRC and the ICRC.

A key element of the Grand Bargain is a focus on increased 'localization' with a target of 25 per cent of humanitarian aid going as directly as possible to local and national agencies. Currently, less than 0.2 per cent of aid monitored by the Financial Tracking Service goes directly to local humanitarian organizations.

Elhadj As Sy, secretary general of the IFRC, says the Grand Bargain was a significant achievement. "Some of the outcomes of the Summit, including the Grand Bargain, the increased recognition given to local action and local actors, and the emphasis

*"Ultimately, the success of this Summit is determined by what happens next; by our ability to translate these ideas and momentum into actions that improve the lives of the world's most vulnerable."*

Elhadj As Sy, secretary general of the IFRC

placed on putting communities at the centre of our work, should help strengthen our response," he said in a statement at the Summit. "Ultimately, the success of this Summit is determined by what happens next; by our ability to translate these ideas and momentum into actions that improve the lives of the world's most vulnerable."

Peter Maurer, president of the ICRC, agreed. "The Grand Bargain is not a panacea for all the problems in the humanitarian ecosystem, but it will help make sure money is put to optimal use and, crucially, help to raise new funds," he said.

## A starting point

These commitments were also welcomed by many small, relatively young, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working in solidarity with local communities hit by crisis or conflict. Mohammed Katoub, from the Syrian American Medical Society (SAMS), welcomes the idea that a greater percentage of funds raised goes directly to organizations working on the ground. More than one-third of SAMS' funds come from private donations but the

## THE ROAD TO ISTANBUL

# A coordinated Movement makes its mark

Many of the most significant and long-lasting outcomes from the World Humanitarian Summit (WHS) are the result of work done well before 9,000 delegates gathered in Istanbul in May 2016. Building on collaboration in 2015 that led to the adoption of a Movement-wide statement to the WHS, as well as Movement position papers on the Grand Bargain and other issues, observers say the 125 Movement participants (representing 72 National Societies, the IFRC and the ICRC) were able to have a significant influence on the final WHS outcomes.

And well before the Summit opened its doors, Movement leaders were building consensus with other key humanitarian leaders. One example is an article, co-authored by IFRC Secretary General Elhadj As Sy and Stephen O'Brien, UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator. Appearing in the Huffington Post, the article made the case for greater localization of aid and more investment in resilience. "The premise is simple," they argued. "Investing in national and local skills, systems and knowledge to build resilience and preparedness will save lives, cut costs and preserve hard-won development gains."

Once in Istanbul, the Movement played a key role in pushing for a re-think of humanitarian financing, with more funding going to local actors, and more emphasis placed on strengthening local capacity to respond, complemented by

national, regional and international organizations where needed. At the same time, the Movement was able to get recognition from key UN officials that the diverse humanitarian sector is more of an 'eco-system', not one monolithic humanitarian system falling under UN supervision.

The IFRC and National Societies, meanwhile, were key players pushing for 25 per cent of humanitarian funding to go to local and national responders by 2020, as well as long-term institutional capacity building — two points strongly affirmed in the final Grand Bargain agreement.

For the ICRC, the Summit was a chance to make the point that when it comes to conflict, the most significant contribution towards alleviating suffering won't come from changes in the way aid is delivered, but through political resolutions of conflict and through respect of international humanitarian law (see page 4). But the ICRC also joined National Societies and the IFRC in efforts to encourage donors to increase the percentage of their funding that is unearmarked or only softly earmarked by 2020. "The commitment by donors to provide more unearmarked funding and impose fewer restrictions will allow us to better carry out our humanitarian activities in conflict zones that are out of the media spotlight, for which we receive little designated funding," said ICRC President Peter Maurer.

## What does the Summit mean to you?

To understand what the promises made at the Summit mean to local organizations, we asked them. Visit our website ([www.rcrcmagazine.org](http://www.rcrcmagazine.org)) to hear what they had to say and leave your mark by telling us what you think. Respondents include an organization that helps Syrian refugees in Greece, a volunteer coordinator in Honduras and a project manager in Burkina Faso.

"Too often, international humanitarian organizations don't consider local collectives as anything more than beneficiaries or recipients of their projects and not as active participants. Local communities should be involved from the beginning. You can't show up and just say 'do this', 'do that'."

**Wendpagnangdé Jocelyne Sankima**, project manager for the Burkinabe Red Cross Society addressing the Summit's call to give local organizations more of a role and voice in humanitarian decision-making and funding.

rest is funnelled through international NGOs, he says. "Hopefully after this we will get direct funds from governments and this will save the overhead costs of international NGOs when they act as a third party," he said.

But many say the Summit is more of a starting point for new level of concerted action rather than the goal itself. Katoub, for example, is deeply concerned about the protection of his colleagues, and other healthcare and aid workers, delivering services within the war-torn country. Without greater protection, changes in the funding paradigm will not bear fruit — and the Summit itself provided few short-term fixes.

"The outcome will not come quickly, but we have to keep highlighting our needs," he says. "We are losing our friends and colleagues inside Syria every day so we push for more protection for them and more accountability for the violators and to ensure humanitarian access for besieged and hard-to-reach areas."

### No more 'wait and see'

Many National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, meanwhile, are hopeful that a new funding paradigm, in which there is more unearmarked funding and a greater percentage of funding going directly to national organizations, will lead to more sustainable and effective programmes within communities.

Combined with sustainable sources of domestic funding — raised within the country by local organizations — National Societies will be better placed to be truly responsive to local needs, and less dependent on external, international donors, says Frehiwot Worku, secretary general of the Ethiopian Red Cross.

"Otherwise the way we respond currently is to wait for emergencies to happen and then get the help," says Worku. "At the moment there is not nearly enough emphasis on preparation and post-disaster resilience."

### Funding the 'unsexy'

While discussions at the Summit helped to bring about greater consensus on exactly these issues, many non-governmental organizations, particularly the smaller ones, say it's still unclear how the Summit's grand promises will help them and their communities develop sustainable solutions.

Many of the smaller organizations that attended the Istanbul event could not take part in key Summit plenary sessions but were able to show off their work at stalls in an exhibition hall five stories below the main conference rooms. At one stall, Anna Tuson, the manager of perhaps the smallest NGO to attend the Istanbul event, Small Projects Istanbul, casts a proud eye over her stall as throngs of customers queue up to buy jewellery, woollen hats and bracelets all made by Syrian refugee women living in Istanbul's Fatih district. "We are the smallest fish here but we seem to be doing the best!" she says.

Lobana, a 26-year old student who fled Aleppo after finishing university last year, relishes the opportunity to be productive: "Everything we make is by hand, we start from scratch and all the women have a role in producing each piece," Lobana says.

The funds generated allow their children to go to school rather than working punishing hours in the city's numerous textile factories. What does the project's manager, Tuson, think of the Grand Bargain's idea that local organizations such as hers should get a greater share of resources? She likes the idea in theory, but she remains realistic given the demands that donors might place on small organizations.

"All our money comes from private donations, crowd-funding and little fund-raisers in cafes," she says. "The biggest problem is nobody wants to pay for those 'unsexy' things like rent, utilities or staff wages, which are crucial. They say what they will pay for, like desks and books, but that's not what we need."

In the coming months, donors and humanitarian organizations, local and international, will be grappling with how to get exactly what is most needed to those who need it most at the local level. And they must do it even as the emergency needs continue to mount and as people in many places in the world are simply trying to survive day to day.

When The Aleppo Project's Shaar asks fellow Syrians what they think the Summit's proposals will mean for people in cities such as Aleppo over time, many are simply not ready to say. "Some of our participants are not psychologically willing to say how things will be in the future — the priority for them is to think about how to stop what is happening now," he said. ■

By **Andrew Connelly**

Andrew Connelly is a freelance journalist based in Istanbul, Turkey.



# In for the long haul

Donors and relief organizations agree that people affected by natural disaster or trapped in protracted conflict need more stable, long-term support.

IN MANY OF TODAY'S EMERGENCIES, relief workers are not just saving lives. They find themselves working year after year in the same places, providing social and health services, keeping schools running, maintaining water-supply and sanitation systems and trying to find ways to help communities in war zones cope with continuous shocks.

Despite the wide range of activities humanitarian organizations undertake in today's crises, the agencies and donors that support their work have historically made a sharp separation between what they consider to be emergency needs or long-term aid. The problem is that in today's drawn-out crises and recurring natural disasters, 'long term' and 'emergency' increasingly overlap.

This is particularly true of the war in Syria, now in its sixth year. "It's been a wake-up call for the humanitarian community," says Julia Betts, an independent consultant who led a recent evaluation of Norway's humanitarian assistance to Syria. "Protracted crises really require blended responses. The problem is that the funding streams weren't set up for that."

The magnitude of the Syrian crisis and the effects of refugees on host countries have created a realization about the need for combined responses that involve both humanitarian and development actors or which allow longer-term funding for humanitarian endeavours.

"At what point do you say: we accept that it is going to be like this for the next five years and we are going to adapt accordingly?" asks Betts. "That will have huge implications for staff, resources and costs."

This is one reason that the IFRC, in response to protracted armed conflicts, climate change and

major communicable disease outbreaks, has for the first time produced a five-year budget for 2016–2020. The challenge now is securing funding for that long-term emergency and development work.

Too often, says Ivana Mrdja, a senior officer in IFRC's Partnerships and Resource Development Department in Geneva, donors still operate with humanitarian and development approaches in two very different silos. She describes the Red Cross Red Crescent's dilemma when approaching donors for funding of health clinics, water and sanitation systems or disaster risk reduction — the whole gambit of resilience-related activities — in places where conflicts persist over years or decades.

"This is when you see the real gap," Mrdja says, noting that for crises that are in the news, IFRC is usually able to attract funding for longer-term programmes and capacity building for National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies. But in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and other situations not getting headlines, it is much more difficult.

### The 'Grand Bargain'

Could bridging the gap between humanitarian and development financing help expand the pie for these increasingly long-term humanitarian re-

sponses? The recent United Nations *Too important to fail—addressing the humanitarian financing gap (High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing Report to the UNSG)* estimated the funding gap for humanitarian action in 2015 to be US\$ 15 billion.

By comparison, total humanitarian aid from Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development donors that same year was US\$ 13.6 billion, despite an increase of 11 per cent. Filling the gap will be a huge challenge given the influx of refugees to Europe, especially as many donors, including Denmark, Germany and Sweden, are using a growing share of their aid to cover housing and other services for asylum seekers at home.

But it is not only more money that is needed. The humanitarian system also has to become more effective, efficient and transparent, according to aid experts. To address the shortcomings, the 'Grand Bargain' agreed to at the World Humanitarian Summit (see page 8) includes 50 commitments to improve the global humanitarian system. In exchange for more transparency and accountability from humanitarian actors, donors have among other things agreed to provide more multi-year funding.

In some ways, the Grand Bargain formalizes a process by which some donors have already begun to adjust. The Swedish aid agency Sida, for example, has been trying to put development funding streams to work in what Peter Lundberg, director of humanitarian assistance at Sida, referred to as the 'grey zones' between development and humanitarian aid.

"We are grappling with these issues," says Lundberg. "We are trying to find ways to relieve some of the pressure on humanitarian budgets, taking key humanitarian principles into full consideration."

The new Swedish five-year country strategy on Syria is a good example. It takes a holistic view, calling for coordination between development and humanitarian efforts and warning against the establishment of parallel structures. It also states that development activities must respect the humanitarian principles of neutrality and impartiality. The primary aim is to "strengthen the resilience of the Syrian population", says Lundberg, adding that the strategy is very clear that development aid should complement but not overshadow humanitarian support.

"Development funding is expanding into the grey zone," he says. "That is what the whole resilience debate has brought about. I see more of that coming." ■

By **Bjorn Amland** and **Ann Danaiya Usher**

Bjorn Amland is editor-in-chief of *Development Today*, a monthly journal on development funding issues based in Norway. Ann Danaiya Usher is *Development Today's* editor.

# A bigger piece of the pie

Donors pledge to increase direct funding of local and national organizations.



## Bonding for impact

To expand their overall funding base and find more predictable, long-term funding, relief organizations are also looking outside the box. One new approach borrows a page from the world of finance, offering a way for socially minded donors to, in a sense, invest in long-term humanitarian work. In May this year, for example, the ICRC and the government of Belgium launched the world's first humanitarian impact bond, in which investors buy government-issued bonds that then fund humanitarian work. Those investors are paid back (with interest) by traditional donor countries (such as Belgium) if and when independent auditors determine that the work funded by the bond had the promised impact. This reduces risks for government donors because they only pay if the project is successful. The first ICRC impact bond will fund specific outcomes in the area of physical rehabilitation for people who have lost limbs due to conflict, usually due to explosions caused by mines, roadside bombs or unexploded ordnance of some sort. "Long, drawn-out conflicts have become the new normal," says Chris Greenwood, head of Leadership Giving at the ICRC. "Therefore, funding needs to endure over time."



At an ICRC orthopaedic centre in Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan, 85 per cent of the employees are former patients who then take on the task of helping others overcome their injuries. Photo: Andrew Quilty/ICRC

THE MOVE TO INCREASE direct funding to local humanitarian organizations comes in the wake of growing international attention to the funding imbalance between international and local actors, in spite of the advantages local organizations have in delivering aid in affected communities.

The IFRC's *World Disasters Report 2015*, for example, concluded that the current donor regime favours international actors like United Nations (UN) agencies and international non-governmental organizations (NGOs), while leaving national governments and local NGOs with a far smaller piece of the pie.

How much smaller is not entirely clear. The best available estimate of funds channelled directly to local and national humanitarian responders last year was 0.2 per cent, though it is generally agreed that this doesn't reflect the full picture. Even Development Initiatives, the United Kingdom-based think tank that came up with the figure, says the true percentage of funding these responders actually receive is likely much higher. "It is simply our best estimate of what local and national NGOs receive directly given currently available data," says Sophia Swithern, head of

research and analysis at Development Initiatives.

She explains that the figure, which rises to 0.5 per cent for 2016, only reflects funds reported through the UN's Financial Tracking Service, to which not all donors and organizations fully report. And it only captures what is given directly, not what comes to local and national organizations indirectly via other partners. "There is a real need for better traceability so that we can see the full picture of what these local NGOs ultimately receive and the length of the transaction chains via which they receive it," she says.

Some donors nonetheless make their own estimates of how much humanitarian aid they give to local and national organizations. In Sweden, Sida's own 'conservative' figure is 12 per cent, while one evaluation estimates that 6 per cent of Norway's humanitarian assistance to Syria was implemented by local NGOs. The UK's Department for International Development agrees that more funds should ultimately go to local and national first responders and it supports the 25 per cent target, but it has no estimate about how much currently goes to local organizations. Neither does Denmark.

### Cutting the middleman?

The reasons for the funding imbalance are many. Strict reporting standards meant to provide basic accountability to taxpayers in donor countries and to prevent corruption or funding of organizations considered as 'terrorist', are almost impossible for local organizations with weaker administrative capacity to meet. As a result, donors use international agencies as middlemen, who take a percentage of the aid for administrative costs.

Critics argue this makes aid more expensive and less efficient. But what are the challenges of sending money more directly to local organizations? For donors, doing so would probably entail more agreements with smaller organizations. Some donors in recent years, however, have deliberately sought to shrink the number of recipients in their portfolios mainly to reduce the administrative burden and the fragmentation of aid. The Norwegian Foreign Ministry, for example, has an explicit goal of decreasing the number of agreements with partners from 5,500 to 4,000 over the coming year.

Sida's Peter Lundberg, meanwhile, says it is out of the question for Sida to chan-

*Continued on page 28*

# The first ones

They are the first ones on the scene. After the bomb blast, after the alarm sounds, they are on their way, on foot, in an ambulance or whatever it takes. With all the talk in international circles about supporting and protecting local humanitarian action, it's a good time to remind ourselves what first responders face in their daily lives. As humanitarian organizations discuss strategies and long-term plans to support them, local volunteers and aid workers must sometimes make life-and-death decisions in seconds. These photos of first responders provide a glimpse into the daily dangers people on the front lines face, be they wildfires in western Canada, bomb blasts in Aleppo, Syria or any number of smaller, localized emergencies or health crises that don't make the international news. They also offer a chance to reflect on concrete things the international community can do to ensure that first responders are better supported and protected. After all, one day, our lives may depend on it.



These Syrian Arab Red Crescent volunteers help women in wheelchairs cross front lines to get medical care in the war-torn city of Aleppo. Photo: REUTERS/Ammar Abdullah

In most emergencies, those who live and work in the affected area are the first to respond. These Ecuadorian Red Cross workers, searching for victims after the April 2016 earthquake, are a good example. During protracted crisis or conflict, the long-term presence of local first responders who are trusted by all sides is also critical. Photo: REUTERS/Henry Romero



Local volunteer networks have played a vital role in saving the lives of migrants crossing the Mediterranean Sea in recent years. Here, a volunteer for the Hellenic Red Cross in Greece guides a boat full of refugees to a safe landing on the island of Lesbos, one of the main points of entry for migrants trying to find safe haven in Europe. Photo: Jarkko Mikkonen/Finnish Red Cross

Hellenic Red Cross rescue team volunteer Ilias Meliadis helps a child from a small boat as it lands on the beach in Lesbos. Photo: Jarkko Mikkonen/Finnish Red Cross

Often, local first responders are there when no one else is around. Here, personnel for the Libyan Red Crescent recover the bodies of migrants who died after their boat sank off the coast east of Tripoli in October 2015. The Red Crescent volunteers ensured every measure was taken to identify the people who died and to provide dignified burials. Photo: REUTERS/Ismail Zetouni



⇒ In many countries caught in political or armed conflict, local volunteers are the only ones who can access tense areas and can respond to the dire needs of people in crisis. Here, Iraqi Red Crescent Society workers provide relief assistance to people who fled from intense fighting in the city of Fallujah and surrounding towns in June 2016.

Photo: Iraqi Red Crescent Society/IFRC



⇒ Local responders are critical because they mobilize for thousands of relatively small, localized disasters that claim as many lives in total as major disasters but do not get the attention of international media and aid organizations. Here is one example: Kenya Red Cross Society rescuers evacuate a woman from the rubble of a six-storey building that collapsed after heavy rains in Nairobi, Kenya in May 2016.

Photo: REUTERS/Thomas Mukoya



⇒ (Left) Many times, the people who help the most during crisis are themselves suffering great hardship. When fighting broke out in Wau, a city in central South Sudan in June, Christina was one of many South Sudan Red Cross volunteers forced to flee. Today she helps raise awareness among displaced people on how to maintain hygiene in difficult conditions. Photo: Alyona Synenko/ICRC (Centre) Red Cross volunteer Jing Luen in Taiwan, China was one of many volunteers who helped people cope with the damage caused by Typhoon Nepartak, which struck the area in July 2016 and caused widespread damage. Photo: Sam Smith/IFRC (Right) Already experienced helping people affected by wildfires in her home province of Quebec, Canadian Red Cross volunteer Cindy Baillargeon travelled several hundred kilometres to spend weeks supervising a team of volunteers responding to the wildfires in the province of Alberta. Photo: Canada Red Cross Society



⇒ Studies have shown that 90 per cent of people whose lives are saved during emergencies are saved by people who know first aid. This is one reason why the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement trains people from all walks of life in basic first aid. Here, the ICRC and The Palestine Red Crescent Society provide training to guards at Al-Aqsa mosque, in the old city of Jerusalem, where thousands of people visit each year. Many may suffer from heat stroke or be affected by episodes of violence that often erupt in this politically tense city. Photo: Jesus Andres Serrano Redondo/ICRC



⇒ In order to bolster the efforts of local first responders, the IFRC has developed regional teams of responders, called Regional Disaster Response Teams (RDRT), with special areas of expertise. Here, Isara lose, an RDRT member from the Samoa Red Cross Society who specializes in water, sanitation and hygiene, joins a team of Fiji Red Cross Society volunteers to help rebuild toilets damaged during Cyclone Winston in February 2016.

Photo: Corinne Ambler/IFRC



⇒ Local first responders work with a range of other local, national and, sometimes, international relief workers. When wildfires began destroying entire communities in western Canada this year, fire fighters from around the world were mobilized. The Canadian Red Cross Society complemented these efforts, raising money for relief activities and offering support to people needing shelter and trying to find displaced loved ones.

Photo: REUTERS/Mark Blinch

⇒ In conflict zones, or other situations of enduring crisis, every day brings new emergencies and needs to which humanitarians must respond. Sometimes, people who respond work for international organizations that have established a long-term presence in the affected country. Here in Saada, Yemen, for example, local employees of the ICRC distribute household items to people affected by the ongoing fighting.

Photo: ICRC





“Please now come into the courtyard with your brooms ready,” the voice in the school public-address system booms through the school hallways. “It’s time to start the cleaning-up campaign to eliminate the mosquito.” A few minutes later, students are in the courtyard, sweeping up any trash where mosquitoes might find even a small place to breed. More than 1,200 students in five schools of the Soyapango Municipality in El Salvador are part of the ‘Mosquito Seen, Mosquito Eliminated’ campaign, a project of the IFRC and the Salvadorean Red Cross Society in partnership with the ministries of health and education. The students divide into two groups: one that works inside the school and the other in nearby communities along with a teacher. “It is very important to clean up the sinks and the gutters on the roofs,” explains one student.

Photo: Salvadorean Red Cross Society

# The fight against Zika

With plenty of front-line experience fighting the mosquito that spreads chikungunya and dengue, National Societies in Latin America gear up against another mosquito-borne disease.

*“Hey neighbour, what are you doing?”*  
*“Hey Karl, I’m putting screens on our doors and windows.”*  
*“What for?”*  
*“Zika.”*  
*“Zika? That’s a flu, right?”*

Well, not exactly. In this dialogue, an excerpt from a radio commercial broadcasting throughout Latin America, one neighbour advises another that Zika is a virus that causes mild fever, rash and red eyes. “Doctors suspect it could also be responsible for microcephaly in newborns,” he adds, “but there is nothing to fear if you just follow some basic rules.”

The radio commercials are just a part of what National Societies in Latin America are doing to combat the spread of Zika, a virus spread by the same kind of mosquito that also transmits dengue, chikungunya and yellow fever. Found throughout the Americas,

except in Canada and parts of Chile, the virus is already affecting 46 countries, particularly hot and humid regions of Latin America.

Only one in four people with the Zika infection develops symptoms. The most common ones include low fever or rash, conjunctivitis, and muscle and joint pain, which appear a few days after a person has been infected by a mosquito or after sexual intercourse with an infected person. With no vaccine for Zika available, the best form of prevention is to avoid mosquito bites. In these photos, we take you along with Red Cross volunteers in Brazil, Colombia and El Salvador as they walk the streets, go door-to-door, visit schools, clean up rubbish and even hop on buses with the anti-Zika message. As Zika spreads more widely in the Americas, such front-line, community-level work could play a critical role controlling both this epidemic and future outbreaks of dengue and chikungunya. ■



⌚ A Brazilian Red Cross volunteer in the city of Nova Friburgo, in Brazil’s Rio de Janeiro state, empties water from a discarded tyre, a common place for mosquitoes to breed in many urban areas.

Photo: Miguel Domingo García/IFRC



⌚ As part of the Salvadorean Red Cross Society’s Zika campaign, a volunteer with a megaphone spreads the message about how to prevent Zika and alerts people that a fumigation team is on the way. Volunteer teams go door-to-door, speaking with residents, advising them how to avoid Zika-carrying mosquitoes and offering fumigation and products such as bleach for cleaning water-holding tanks that could contain hard-to-see mosquito eggs. Photo: Salvadorean Red Cross Society

⌚ To get the Zika-prevention message out, volunteers of the Colombian Red Cross Society go where the people are: bus and train stations, intersections on busy streets, shopping malls and markets, even inside city buses. Colombia has reported more than 3,000 cases of the disease since the beginning of the year. The volunteers answer people’s questions — “Can our children still play outside?” is a common one — and they share information about how to use bednets, as well as how to stop mosquitoes from breeding.

Photo: Colombian Red Cross Society



# Something's cooking in Navojoa

One cup social media. Two spoonfuls of enthusiasm. A dash of regular exercise and a basket of garden-grown vegetables. These are just some of the ingredients that go into the 'Healthy Lifestyles' initiative — a recipe catching on in communities in Mexico and beyond.

**D**ONNING A WHITE APRON, marked with the 'Vida Saludable' (Healthy Lifestyles) logo and armed with a wooden spoon and chopping knife, Francisco Javier Barreras, the Mexican Red Cross emergency management coordinator for the city of Navojoa, cooks up a savoury, low-cost and easy-to-cook dish of chicken, vegetables and rice. All the while, a digital camera records the cook in action — peeling the carrots, chopping the zucchini (courgettes) and narrating each step. A healthy food connoisseur becoming known for his self-made, healthy cooking show, Barreras shares his recipes on social media (YouTube, Facebook and

Instagram, to name a few). Many of the ingredients come from his own garden, which boasts a variety of fruits and vegetables, from mangos to pumpkin. "We need to offer ingredients that people know and like, or else they just won't eat it," he says.

The home-cooked food show is just one of Barreras's contributions to an IFRC-initiated internet website platform called Healthy Lifestyles, which helps create awareness about non-communicable diseases such as diabetes and cancer by promoting good eating habits, exercise and reduced alcohol consumption and smoking. The approach is similar to an e-learning course and it includes informa-



tion ranging from how to detect the symptoms of diabetes to healthy eating tips and suggestions for community bike rides, and exercise sessions in local schools and parks. The programme has enjoyed early success in Mexico, a country with the highest obesity rate in the world, according to the World Health Organization. Problems related to obesity account for 10 per cent of the country's health budget and diabetes type 2 is the leading cause of death, followed by heart disease. In all, non-communicable diseases cause 77 per cent of the nation's deaths. "We all have family members who either have these diseases or have died from them,"

says Isela Velázquez, Red Cross youth coordinator for the Mexican city of Guanajuato. For Velázquez, working with young children in schools is the key. They are just now forming their habits and they can influence their parents, she says. Similarly, in Mexico City, volunteers bring games to children in marginalized communities, to help create healthy habits and to provide safe, fun social activities that could also serve as alternatives to drugs or violence. ■

Check out the Healthy Lifestyles online community at [www.healthylifestylecommunity.org](http://www.healthylifestylecommunity.org)



From garden to Instagram, Francisco Javier Barreras's recipes begin with fresh, home-grown ingredients and end up as colourful photos and videos that he shares through social media. It's all part of building the Healthy Lifestyles virtual community, where members can share simple and cost-effective recipes as alternatives to fast food. Photos: Nadia Shira Cohen/IFRC



☞ For many, non-communicable diseases such as diabetes are a family affair. Rosa Isela Martinez, who lives in Celeya, about 200 kilometres north of Mexico City, visits the grave of her father, who suffered from diabetes, as does her husband. Both parents also struggle with obesity and they hope to break the cycle by restricting their children's sugar intake. It's a struggle because both she and her husband work long hours and often eat only once or twice a day. This habit, common among the poorer, working class, can be unhealthy as it slows down the body's metabolism and encourages desperate, erratic eating.  
Photo: Nadia Shira Cohen/IFRC

☞ Meanwhile, much of the food that is cheap and easily available in markets such as this one in Guanajuato, Mexico, is heavy in carbohydrates, fats and simple sugars that the body metabolizes quickly into fat. The sugars in fibrous fruits and vegetables, however, are absorbed by the body more slowly, providing more nutrients and producing less fat. Photo: Nadia Shira Cohen/IFRC



☞ Many in Guanajuato feel the way to break the cycle is by educating young people and creating healthy habits before bad ones set in. "We need to break the cycle of poor eating habits, as well as excessive smoking and alcohol consumption," says Pedro Idirin, a member of the National Red Cross Council and a state delegate for Guanajuato. For this reason, Mexican Red Cross volunteers regularly visit schools where they offer nutrition lessons, guide students through the online Healthy Lifestyles e-learning course and try to instil the habit of regular exercise. "Exercise should be like brushing your teeth every day," says Idirin.  
Photos: Nadia Shira Cohen/IFRC



☞ One challenge for many people in Mexico is a lack of regular health screenings that might indicate early warning signs of diabetes or hypertension. For this reason, volunteers visit schools where test results could offer a concrete incentive for young people to change their habits before illness sets in. Volunteers also reach out to other communities with little access to healthcare. At this market in Navojoa, people come from rural communities to buy essential supplies for the week. By offering the checks for free at the market, people don't have to lose a day's pay just to go to the doctor. And for many people who earn very little, a visit to the doctor isn't even an option. Photos: Nadia Shira Cohen/IFRC



☞ Volunteers also visit urban neighbourhoods with limited access to health services and healthy nutrition options. Here in the Popular Cascada neighbourhood of Mexico City, volunteers engage children in popular, traditional games like hula-hoop or kicking soccer balls through rings. Photo: Nadia Shira Cohen/IFRC



# The return of 'super' El Niño

Though they come from different continents, the images are eerily similar: a lake in Viet Nam that supplied water to local farms and communities now completely dry; a major river in Colombia that nourished the fishing trade now a narrow trickle surrounded by a basin of cracked mud; a shrinking watering hole in southern Malawi. These are just a few examples of the havoc the 2014–2016 El Niño weather patterns are wreaking in various corners of the globe. Caused when surface water in tropical parts of the Pacific Ocean becomes warmer than average and this heat is released into the atmosphere, the El Niño weather patterns in many areas go unnoticed or have beneficial impacts. But they can also cause extreme problems when too much, or too little, rain falls. In Peru, El Niño has caused heavy rains and floods. In Canada, it helped create the conditions for massive wildfires. In many parts of Africa, the 2014–2016 El Niño has contributed to massive crop failures, livestock starvation and food insecurity for more than 30 million people. These photos show what the current El Niño, which many are comparing to the 1997–1998 'super' El Niño, is doing to communities around the world and what's being done to help people cope.



☞ The El Niño weather patterns are one reason the Nsanje district of southern Malawi experienced heavy flooding in the rainy season of 2014–2015 and then extreme dryness the following year, causing significant food insecurity. Roster Kufandiko, the assistant disaster manager at the Malawi Red Cross Society, has been helping people cope as crops withered and died. To address the wider crisis affecting southern Africa, the IFRC has announced a major, US\$ 110 million, four-year initiative to support the response of National Red Cross Societies across the region.

Photo: Thea Rabe/Norwegian Red Cross

☞ In Viet Nam's coastal Mekong Delta region, El Niño has turned once verdant rice paddies and a network of canals and lakes into brown, desert-scape while saltwater contamination from encroaching seawater has contaminated croplands further and further up the delta. "Salinity is four times higher than seasonal averages," said Phan Duy Le, vice chairman of Quoi Dien commune in Thanh Phu district, Ben Tre province. Lakes like this one in Ninh Thuan province have all but dried up. All told, the drought has severely affected more than 1.75 million people in 18 provinces. Photo: Giang Pham/IFRC



☞ A fisherman walks on the shore of the Magdalena River, the longest and most important river in Colombia, now affected by severe drought. Photo: REUTERS/John Vizcaino

☞ Known as Viet Nam's rice bowl, the Mekong Delta accounts for more than half of the country's rice and fruit production. In the Southern Central region, however, farming has stopped on roughly 45 per cent of total agricultural land. In the Mekong Delta, at least 300,000 households (1.5 million people) have had no income for several months. Here in Phuoc Chien commune, in Ninh Thuan province, Vietnam Red Cross Society staff provide clean water for daily use and cash grants to help people get by until the next harvest in September. Photo: Giang Pham/IFRC



☞ In the Afar district in northern Ethiopia, people have been hoping, in vain, for much need rainfall, as severe drought has ruined three consecutive harvests right across the country. More than 10 million people are in need of food aid. The drought makes access to food difficult in Ethiopia where up to 80 per cent of people make their living from farming. The situation in the country has not been this severe since the mid-1980s, when famine led to more than 400,000 deaths. "In Afar, people's livelihoods and main income come from cattle, but almost all the cows have now died," says Marjo Leppänen, an IFRC logistics delegate in Ethiopia.

Photo: Tatu Blomqvist/Finnish Red Cross



☞ In response to the crisis, volunteers and staff of the Ethiopian Red Cross Society have endured extreme temperatures and difficult travel to hard-to-reach regions in order to deliver much-needed water and sanitation services, nutrition, livelihood support and healthcare, particularly for malnourished children under five years and pregnant and lactating women. Photo: Tatu Blomqvist/Finnish Red Cross

☞ In Somaliland, Somalia, cyclones like this one are both feared and seen as a sign of rain. These days, the cyclones have been more common than the rain however, forcing people from the border region between Ethiopia and Somaliland to the coastal areas looking for green land to graze their livestock. Photo: Tatu Blomqvist/Finnish Red Cross

## El Niño in numbers

**1.75 million:** Number of Vietnamese people directly affected by El Niño-related drought conditions, which have now lasted two years.

**10 million:** Estimated number of people in Ethiopia in need of food aid due to El Niño-related drought.

**49 million:** Number of people across southern Africa expected to be struggling to get adequate food by the end of the year.

**110 million:** The amount in US dollars the IFRC hopes to raise as part of a four-year initiative to help National Societies in southern Africa address the climate-related crises sweeping the region.



☞ The people pictured left travelled more than 300 kilometres but couldn't find food for their animals. Many families lost most or all of their livestock on the way. At the outskirts of Qulujeed village, Ethiopian Red Cross Society volunteers provided water and food for the people, but for many of their animals it was already too late. Photo: Tatu Blomqvist/Finnish Red Cross



☞ Lack of access to clean water caused by drought or flooding often creates new emergencies that compounds the crisis. Fanuel Sadick, 23, and Patrick, 31, are volunteers at the cholera clinic in Malawi's Zomba district, where the ongoing drought led people to drink from contaminated water sources, leading in turn to an outbreak of cholera. Photo: Thea Rabe/Norwegian Red Cross



☞ In many places, El Niño struck just as other crises were already unfolding. In April 2015, people in Burundi began fleeing their country due to pre-election violence. Then El Niño came along, causing extensive flooding that destroyed homes, schools, roads and bridges. The Burundi Red Cross provided first aid to the injured and set up two camps for those left homeless by the floods, among other things. Photo: Burundi Red Cross



☞ In the Diffa region of Niger, tens of thousands of refugees and displaced people are living in harsh conditions because of the fighting in neighbouring Nigeria. Local communities — already struggling with economic hardship due to drought and the loss of cross-border trade with Nigeria — are finding it hard to cope. Agricultural output, which is concentrated around Lake Chad, has plummeted and thousands of nomadic herders are stuck where there is not enough grazing land or water for their livestock. The family of 60-year-old Maina M'Bodo owned around 100 cows that grazed on islands on the Nigerian side of Lake Chad, before the fighting forced them to move. "The rebels attacked us and killed five members of my family, including one of my children," he says. "They took all our cattle. By taking my cows, they've taken my life." M'Bodo's family received building materials and food aid from the ICRC and when the family arrived in Yebi, near the border with Nigeria, the village chief gave them some land to set up home. "I sell straw now and my wives earn a living by grinding millet for the locals," he says.

Photo: Sylvain Cherkaoui/Cosmos for ICRC

☞ Water is a scarce resource for the thousands of displaced people and refugees who have fled the fighting in Nigeria. To avoid the queues at wells, some villagers in Toumour are drawing water from a pond where livestock drink. To provide more people with clean drinking water, the ICRC has drilled new boreholes. The ICRC is also boosting access to clean water in areas where water is scarce but the population has risen — creating the potential for tensions. In 2015, the ICRC provided emergency food aid to more than 200,000 people — refugees, displaced people and locals. Photo: Sylvain Cherkaoui/Cosmos for ICRC



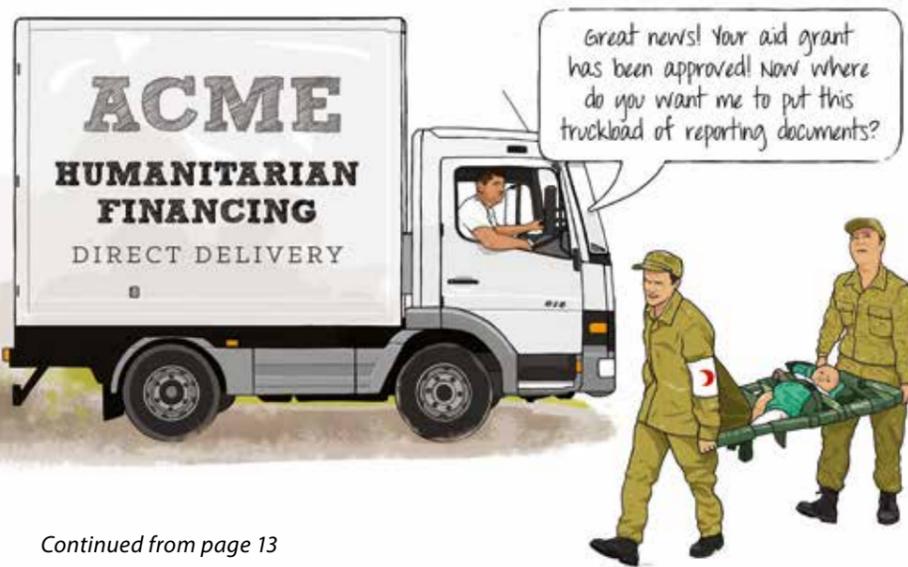
☞ ICRC support for doctors in Diffa regional hospital in Niger helps them carry out emergency operations on patients who would otherwise have to travel more than 1,000 kilometres to the capital, Niamey. Here, an ICRC nurse checks on a patient receiving intravenous rehydration.

Photo: Sylvain Cherkaoui/Cosmos for ICRC



☞ El Niño impacts each area differently. The best way to judge whether El Niño is likely to bring too much or too little rainfall is to monitor seasonal forecasts. In Peru, at the end of 2015, seasonal and short-term forecasts of heavy rain triggered a range of measures that included water purification, fumigation against disease-carrying mosquitoes, sanitation measures and distribution of hygiene kits to families in numerous communities. With help from the IFRC, the Peruvian Red Cross offered a training workshop and field exercise on emergency shelter for volunteers and staff in Chiclayo. Photo: Peruvian Red Cross





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Illustration: Jonathan Williams

nel funds directly to local first responders. Sida funds that go to National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, for example, are dispersed via the IFRC or the Swedish Red Cross. Other local organizations are funded via the Country-Based Pool Funds run by the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). "There is only one layer between us and the local NGO," he says, referring to the OCHA funds. In the Pakistan fund, he says, 60–70 per cent of the money goes to local organizations.

The United Kingdom, meanwhile, is one of three donors supporting the NGO-run START Network that directs almost half of its resources to local and national responders. It also launched a Disasters Emergency Preparedness Programme last year with US\$ 53 million in funding to improve the capacity of local and national NGOs. Rather than transfer funds directly, the UK wants to reach the 25 per cent goal by supporting efforts of international NGOs and the UN to pass on more funds to national and local partners.

Likewise, Denmark recognizes the advantages of local organizations and is committed to the overall aim of increasing support for local and national responders. But the Danish aid administration lacks the capacity to implement the level of monitoring that direct funding to local groups would demand, says Stephan Schönemann at the Danish Foreign Ministry.

Notwithstanding donors' limitations, some say the continued heavy reliance on international organizations is simply not tenable. An evaluation of Denmark's humanitarian aid by the UK-based aid mon-

itoring organization ITAD questions why so much of Denmark's aid is channelled through UN agencies. These agencies "do not implement directly, are often slower than NGOs at delivering humanitarian assistance and their implementing partners face extremely high transaction costs", ITAD writes.

## Getting money direct to the scene

When an earthquake measuring 7.8 on the Richter scale struck the central coastline of Ecuador in April, Ecuadorian Red Cross emergency responders were among the first on the scene, searching for survivors, offering first aid, food, blankets and whatever comfort they could.

With time of the essence, the National Society wasted no time raising the call for support. As an international emergency appeal was launched by the IFRC, the Ecuadorian Red Cross also turned to an online tool that offers a way for people to donate money directly to local relief organizations.

This online fund-raising platform also allows local organizations to reach out globally for support through their websites and social media. By mid-July, the effort had raised more than US\$ 660,000 mainly due to donations triggered via social media, especially Twitter, as the Ecuadorian diaspora tweeted and re-tweeted the appeal.

As the humanitarian sector debates ways to bring greater support directly to locally based organizations, this online platform offers an interesting option, particularly in the case of smaller disasters, which don't gain widespread, international media coverage. When Tropical Storm Erika hit the island of Dominica in the western Caribbean in August 2015, floods and landslides claimed 11 lives and left more than 570 people without homes.

The crisis wasn't big enough to make international headlines but the need for shelter, health services, water, sanitation and hygiene promotion was significant. The IFRC launched an emergency appeal and released US\$ 171,000 from its Disaster Relief Emergency Fund but the National Society also turned to this online fundraising platform.

After one week, the Dominica Red Cross Society collected roughly US\$ 11,000 and after one month, US\$ 51,000 had been raised. The platform takes a 5 per cent fee for administrative expenses, but for the Dominica Red Cross, this is a small price given that they would not have otherwise received any of these donations.

The IFRC has worked with the Swiss Red Cross and the online fundraising platform to boost online fund-raising with and by National Societies. Today, 161 National Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies use the system, which accepts donations in more than 80 currencies, via 20 payment methods and operates in 12 languages.

Instead, international organizations should serve more as enablers of other people's work and not fly in with expensive materials and high salaries every time a crisis strikes, says Christina Bennett, a researcher at the Overseas Development Institute, a UK-based policy research organization.

Bennett is the author of a recent report, *Time to let go: remaking humanitarian action for the modern era*. It calls for the UN and large international NGOs to let go of power and control, and enable national and local aid organizations to lead crisis response. One of the challenges is to raise funds for strengthening the capacity of local organizations.

This is exactly the logic behind the IFRC's recently launched US\$ 50 million National Society Investment Fund, which will raise money specifically for the organizational capacity of National Societies to meet the monitoring and reporting needs of donors and also seek new sources of funds in the local and national arena. ■

# Resources

## PUBLICATIONS



### Istanbul and beyond: Perspectives and pledges of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement on the occasion of the World Humanitarian Summit

ICRC/IFRC, 2016

In his report prepared for the World Humanitarian Summit, United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon identified critical challenges to the humanitarian sector and issued calls for action to defend and reaffirm core humanitarian principles and international humanitarian law, increase investment in resilience and local humanitarian capacity, and take major steps to address the mounting humanitarian needs of migrants and displaced persons. This report from the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement provides perspective and experience of the Movement on these important questions and on other issues, such as volunteer safety and health services in crisis, that should be high on the humanitarian agenda. It also sets out pledges and calls to action, many drawn from resolutions adopted at the 32nd International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, held in Geneva in December 2015.

Available in Arabic, English, French and Spanish

### Joint International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement Paper on the Grand Bargain

ICRC/IFRC, 2016

Humanitarian organizations are responding to more needs than ever. Future investment in humanitarian action must close the gap between growing demands and the resources available to meet them. The United Nations Secretary-General convened a High-Level Panel on Humanitarian Financing, which released a report in January 2016. Among the proposed recommendations was a 'Grand Bargain' between major donors and humanitarian organizations that seeks greater efficiency and improved incentives in financing humanitarian action. This joint IFRC-ICRC paper offers the Movement response to the Grand Bargain.

Available in English

### Beyond Ebola: from dignified response to dignified recovery

IFRC, 2016

Ebola is no stranger to Africa but, for the past year and a half, the West African epidemic has forced us all to rethink how we should respond to health emergencies. Unless the lessons learned in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone are put into universal practice, the virus disease will return — and a repetition does not bear thinking about.

Available in English

### The domestic implementation of international humanitarian law (CD version)

ICRC, 2015

This manual is a practical tool to assist policy-makers, legislators and other stakeholders worldwide

ICRC materials are available from the International Committee of the Red Cross, 19 avenue de la Paix, CH-1202 Geneva, Switzerland. [www.shop.icrc.org](http://www.shop.icrc.org)  
IFRC materials are available from the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, P.O. Box 303, CH-1211 Geneva 19, Switzerland. [www.ifrc.org](http://www.ifrc.org)

in adhering to international humanitarian law (IHL) instruments and implementing them domestically. Drawing on the ICRC Advisory Service's 15 years of experience, the manual offers guidance to help states implement IHL and meet all their obligations under that body of law, including the repression of serious violations. The document also includes links to the Treaties and Commentaries database and National Implementation database, while the CD version of the manual includes two databases: the database of national implementation measures and a compilation of IHL treaties and documents.

Available in English

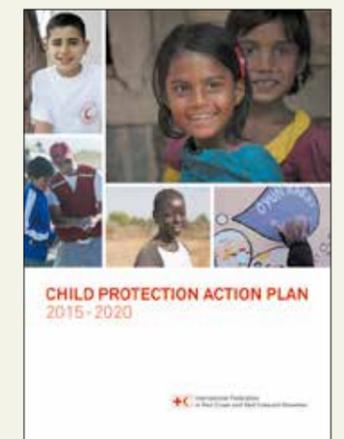
### Child protection action plan 2015–2020 and Child protection in emergencies – Briefing paper

IFRC, 2016

The *Child protection action plan 2015–2020* aims to define a

practical plan of action for the IFRC Secretariat to effectively integrate child protection as a minimum standard within its organizational systems and development, its response to protracted crisis and all its emergency operations. The *Child protection in emergencies – Briefing paper* offers basic guidance to agencies that respond to emergencies and are, therefore, responsible for ensuring that they meet the child protection minimum standards. This includes the IFRC and all National Societies.

Available in English



## ONLINE

### The Humanitarian Law & Policy Blog

ICRC, 2016

The Humanitarian Law & Policy Blog is a new web platform that offers a space for concise analyses, opinions and accessible updates on humanitarian affairs (<http://blogs.icrc.org/law-and-policy/>). Launched on the occasion of the World Humanitarian Summit in Istanbul, the blog aims to become a reference platform for accessible debates and opinions on humanitarian policy and law issues of relevance to ICRC. It also aims to further develop the ICRC's contribution to these regional and global debates, raising humanitarian issues and concerns that need to be addressed. It will be continuously fed with substantive content from a number of ICRC experts and external contributors.

### Updated commentaries on the Geneva Conventions

ICRC, 2016

The four Geneva Conventions of 1949 form the foundation of international humanitarian law and provide a framework for what is acceptable and what is prohibited in armed conflict. In the 1950s, the ICRC published a set of commentaries on these Conventions, giving practical guidance on their implementation. But to reflect the developments in law and practice since then, the ICRC has commissioned a new set of commentaries which seek to reflect the current interpretations of the Conventions. The first instalment, the updated Commentary on the First Convention, has been published online at [www.icrc.org/ihl/full/GCI-commentary](http://www.icrc.org/ihl/full/GCI-commentary).

Available in English